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Urgent care to stay

NHS eases councillors concerns.
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Breaking Ground

General Electric plant coming to Welland.
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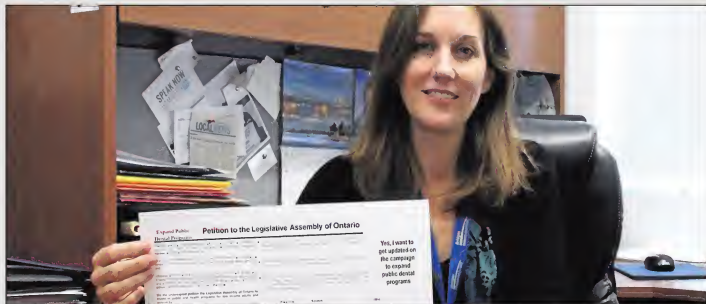
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Dental care needed



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Lori Kleinsmith sits in her office at Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne with one of the pages of a petition she has together with the Niagara Dental Health Coalition to fight for better dental care for adults with low incomes. See more on page 3.

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LOCAL NEWS

Urgent care not going anywhere

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Niagara Health System's Port Colborne urgent care centre isn't going anywhere right now.

Suzanne Johnston, president of the NHS, spoke to Port Colborne city council on Monday night to address fears and concerns residents have about the status of the city's urgent care centre.

Mayor (John) Maloney thought it would be helpful if I came out to the council because there were a number of rumours that the Port Col-

borne hospital was going to close in November, which isn't the case at all," said Johnston.

She said while it is true the health system is undergoing development stages of restructuring, there are no plans set in stone yet and everything has to go through the approval process.

Ideas going into that planning process aren't just from the mind of one individual either.

"It's important to engage in dialogue at the community level with both municipal government and with individuals

in communities."

The anticipated opening of a new hospital in Niagara Falls at Lyons Creek and Montrose Roads has the potential to alter where services will be available, but that's not expected to be operational until 2022 or 2023.

"People worry about losing things and we're not even sure



Johnston

where we are (or) what could be different," Johnston said. There are a couple of things that factor into what changes will come into play: community needs and budget.

Having these sorts of conversations with residents will help determine what services a community requires.

When it comes to the budget, Johnston said for the first time, NTHS has had three consecutive years of surplus, which is going towards paying down the accumulated debt from years before.

Maloney said news about the surplus is good because there

were concerns about budget restraints and how it would affect Port Colborne.

Johnston said health care may not even look the same in years to come.

"Things will be changing in our world and, of course, that gives us the opportunity to learn and do things differently," she said.

For now though, the urgent care centre is staying.

"(Johnston) indicated there are no planned changes to the urgent care operations in Port Colborne," Maloney said. "They will continue to invest as much as they feel is necessary to keep

the urgent care centre functioning well and they are not going to close beds in Port Colborne."

As for any changes that might come in the future, he said that's too far off to deal with in 2016.

— with files from Michelle Allenberg

lbarton@postmedia.com



Maloney

NRP chief lays down law on sick days

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire has read his officers the riot act over absenteeism. *The Standard* has learned.

McGuire fired off an internal memo over "steadily increasing use of sick time."

On Aug. 11, the day the memo was written, almost 40 front-line personnel were off sick. He noted that it also happened to be the hottest day of year.

"I am certain that some of the absences are totally justified," McGuire wrote in the memo, which was obtained by

The Standard. "However, the trend that we are experiencing has to change. I need each and every one of you to look in the mirror and satisfy yourself that you are doing the right thing, every day. If you are not, then make a change."

"If you are in a supervisory role, supervise. Have the conversation with your subordinates."

McGuire in an interview said the memo was meant to be internal and for his employees, not for the public or the media.

"That said I recognize that there will often be someone who feels they have the right to release my internal communications publicly," he said. "I

do not feel it is appropriate to comment publicly on specifics of deployment issues. So I won't."

McGuire wrote in his memo that for the past six months, the use of sick time is well above the average for the past three years.

According to reports filed to the police board and publicly available, the overtime hours needed to cover shift shortages because of sick time jumped to 16,898 in 2015 from 11,655 in 2014.

The NRP needed 12,536 hours of overtime to cover sick time in 2013.

See **LAW** on page 8



MIKE DUMAYRIS/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire.



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LOCAL NEWS

OHIP coverage lacks dental visit

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

The Niagara Dental Health Coalition is drawing attention to the fact that in Ontario physical and dental health are not treated equally.

A doctor's visit doesn't cost anything under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. When it comes to dental coverage though, it's privatized.

OHIP doesn't cover taking care of teeth.

Lori Kleinsmith, health promoter with Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne and chair of the coalition, said this is likely because when this medical care was first brought about in the 1960s, dental health wasn't seen as a big deal.

"The links with health or with dental health issues and overall health weren't as well-known back then," she said.

The idea was you brush your teeth and you're OK.

"It was more of a personal responsibility."

Nowadays, she said, it's much better understood the ramifications poor dental health can have on overall health.

The problem that still stands is there are somewhere between two and three million people in Ontario alone who can't afford it because they don't have insurance and don't have the financial means. Because they can't afford it, they don't go.

Instead they end up in emergency rooms or doctor's offices with professionals who don't take care of oral health.

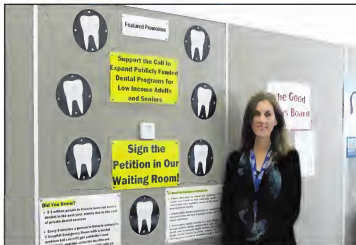
Working at Bridges, she's seen firsthand how people come in with tooth aches and other oral health issues that have gotten progressively worse.

Kleinsmith said the coalition is made up of representatives across the region who can speak to this issue and who are advocating for it.

"Our main focus is really on advocating for better access to dental programs," she said. "Specifically when it comes to adults and seniors because ... many of them don't have access."

While the coalition has been doing what it can to get the attention of the provincial government, she said the Ministry of Health has been "very quiet."

The next move is paper peti-



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Lori Kleinsmith, from Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne and the Niagara Dental Health Coalition, is on a mission to help bring dental care to adults with low incomes. She stands beside the wall dedicated to sharing information about it at the centre.

tions.

"We're going to be presenting them in late September to our MPPs and asking them there to present them in the legisla-

ture in the fall to Minister (Eric) Hoskins, the minister of health, and again asking them to make this a priority."

The timing fits into a review

Kleinsmith said the provincial government is doing of the health care system, so the goal is to impress upon the political leaders that health care is

about more than just doctor and emergency room visits.

She said there's a model already in place to work off of. In 2008 when the provincial government put forth an initiative to reduce poverty, it released a dental health program for impoverished youth.

The Healthy Smiles program, while great, only applies to ages 17 and under.

"We put people between a rock and a hard place when it comes to their teeth," she said. "But if it's any other part of the body you can go see your doctor and get it checked out."

She said the government has promised an adult program by 2025, but that's too long to wait.

Bridges has already accumulated 10 pages of signatures. Kleinsmith said there are petitions available to sign at many community health centres. Port Colborne city hall also has petitions ready for signing.

"It's not an insolvable problem," she said. Instead, it's a matter of showing how much of a concern it is and getting something done about it.

barton@postmedia.com

IN BRIEF

Wainfleet lifts burning ban

Wainfleet has finally gotten enough rain to lift the burning ban that has been in place since late June.

While most municipalities had lifted their burning bans a week earlier, Wainfleet held on to its ban because it hadn't gotten quite as much rain as everyone else.

Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs said in a news release that the township has now

received that much needed rainfall and has provided the needed "safety margin."

Fire Chief Harry Flagg said in the release that while the ban is lifted, residents and visitors should use extreme caution when burning.

Open air burning bylaw regulations must also be followed. The bylaw can be found on the township's website.

Honk if you like the eagles over the falcons



BENNO FRANKE/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

High school football wasn't in season, but Canada geese certainly were Monday at Lakeshore Catholic in Port Colborne. They were busy preparing - and, yes, fertilizing - the main gridiron while player tryouts kicked off on a nearby practice field.

IMPORT NEWS

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P POSTMEDIA

Don Marco's a noble choice for Italian



TIFFANY
MAYER

It's wise to listen to your law-

yer. Wisser, still, if he happens to be a friend with impeccable taste in food, I couldn't help but think I was being led astray, though, when Ross Macfarlane, lawyer, friend and bon vivant, suggested I meet him for lunch at Don Marco's Italian Eatery in Welland.

And I wasn't sure whether to blame him or my GPS while driving through a residential neighbourhood in Welland's east end, past a high school, an elementary school, and brown-brick bungalow after brown-brick bungalow. Where the heck was I going?

That's when Don Marco's appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, in a small plaza, neighbouring a convenience store at Wellington and Lincoln streets.

If the eggplant Parmesan was as good as Ross promised, I had arrived at the epitome of a strip mall gem: that place you'd never know existed until driving past en route to somewhere else, then making note to stop in someday.

This was that someday. It was also the day I witnessed how deft Ross is with a menu as he ordered his eggplant Parmesan from the lunch card, and a side of gnocchi not mentioned anywhere as an option.

I followed his lead. After all, the man has never given me bad advice.

The eggplant was thin and crisp, creamy where it counted. The pep of the red sauce was the perfect foil for the breading, and that rich potato gnocchi whose cylindrical shape gave away it was handmade.

I got to know Ross a little better that day.

Lucy Ventresca and her brother, Rob, will tell you they know each other better since taking the helm of the restaurant three years ago. They run it on behalf of its namesake owner, Lucy's son, Marco.

"(Rob) didn't know I knew how to swear," Lucy said with a laugh.

What they realized, however, was that running a restaurant was uncharted territory for both, and that family loyalty compels people to do the unexpected.

Marco, who runs Luciano's Pizzeria nearby, had planned to open Don Marco's as a sports bar. But a fire in the plaza, which once housed apartments on a second level, forced him to turn to family for help rebuilding his dream.

Mom and uncle stepped up, spending a year doing away with the heavy wood interior you'd expect of a neighbourhood joint planning to broadcast the biggest games while offering wings and beer. With their entry, they added granite and glass tile, and installed fewer TVs.

Family recipes would replace pub grub on the menu. Don Marco's would be "casual dining with a polished appeal," Rob said.

Lucy quit her day job as an office administrator; Rob moved back to Welland from Toronto. He delivered flyers door to door, and dropped business cards at the courthouse to tempt hungry legal eagles on their lunch breaks. Lucy spread the word among her former colleagues. And together, they worried when they opened the doors officially in November 2013.

"I was skeptical. It was \$18 veal Parmesan. When I left Welland, people weren't spending that kind of money on dinner," Rob recalled. "We didn't know what we were doing."

They did know to surround themselves with good people. They recruited chef Jennifer Mason to put out their mother Maria's recipes for red sauce and lasagna with more



Lucy Ventresca and her brother Rob run Don Marco's Italian Eatery, a popular restaurant in Welland's east end.



Don Marco's serves classic and contemporary Italian food, including several pasta options.

contemporary Italian dishes, like the penne polio with garlic curry cream.

They hired serving staff who could switch easily from English to French when filling orders for Italian, as might be expected in Welland.

"I was scared in the beginning," Lucy recalled. "People call you over to the table and it's like 'Oh no, what are they going to say?'"

Chances are, it was positive. Since opening, Don Mar-

co's has won *Welland Tribune's* readers' choice awards for best Italian and best lunch three years in a row. It even held the coveted TripAdvisor No. 1 spot among restaurants in Ontario for six months soon after opening, Rob said.

"It's ahead of schedule from where I thought it would be, considering the increase in (restaurant) competition," he said. "People like the food. They like the service. People say, 'I haven't been in a restaurant

with so much laughter.' There's a lot of locals (who come), a lot of regulars."

And they eat a lot of chicken and veal Parmesan, despite Rob's initial apprehension. Their arancini and lasagna are also big sellers, and are carried over when the menu is tweaked every few months.

"Don't forget the gnocchi," Lucy added. "I can't keep up making it."

Now the biggest worry is how they'll accommodate eve-

ryone during the dinner rushes. Welland's, it seems, like to have their evening meal at the same time, Rob said.

"They all want to eat at 6:30," he said with a laugh.

Might I recommend lunch with your lawyer instead?

Tiffany Mayer is the author of *Niagara Food: A Flavourful History of the Postcard's Bounty* (The History Press). She also blogs about food and farming at eatingniagara.com. You can reach her at etingsniagara@gmail.com



The house-made arancini at Don Marco's.

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GE plant getting \$26.5 million plant

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Calling it "the next generation of manufacturing," Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a \$26.5-million jobs and Prosperity Fund grant for General Electric's planned factory on Silverthorn Street in Welland.

Through the grant, the GE location, off of Highway 140, will be able to create 220 jobs and have a positive impact on the economy.

"This is an exciting, exciting day for Welland, for the Niagara Region and for Ontario," she said. "In this day and age, a global company like GE can choose to invest anywhere."

Elyse Allan, president and chief executive officer of GE Canada, said this factory is the country's first "brilliant factory."

"Several years ago, GE announced a challenging and exciting ambition to shift from a traditional industrial company to a company that really embraces what's happening in the world around digital technology," she said.

Not only will the factory be using the latest technologies to create reciprocating gas engines, diesel engines and other GE products, it will also be operating differently from other factories. Heiner Markhoff, president of GE Distributed Power, said the factory will be using the leading manufacturing prac-

tices and tools. In addition to that, it will be able to operate off the grid.

"The plant in Welland will not only be able to rely on the grid, but on peak periods will be off the grid."

He said during off-grid periods, these GE engines will be humming in the background.

Like Wynne, Markhoff was at the groundbreaking ceremony to do more than just speak.

"At this brilliant factory here in Welland, we're planning to invest \$165 million US dollars," he said.

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said the amount of money being invested into this facility is great. Both the jobs created and the economic impact are "extremely substantial" to the city and Niagara, he said.

The local economy especially will be benefiting from the factory during the building stages.

"Certainly there's going to be a big impact on local business as the project comes on site and starts to do their construction," Campion said, noting some of the investment money will filter into the economy.

When he addressed the crowd, he said it was "a fantastic day to be mayor of Welland."

During his time at the podium, Campion was quick to point out the joint efforts it took to make this happen, something that wasn't missed by the other speakers either.

"The whole city and the

region have shown great teamwork and tremendous support for us being here," Allan said.

"It is that combination of the technology, the people, the collaboration and the partnerships that really make the secret sauce that will make this such a wonderful, globally competitive, long-lived facility."

The initial announcement for the plant came back in June. The Welland location was chosen for its proximity to the border and Allan added on Friday there is a lot of opportunity for expansion.

Regional Chairman Alan Casslin said doing business in Niagara makes sense. He said the region is the first foreign trade point zone and has a lot to offer. The GE factory is set to open in 2018.

Also in attendance for the groundbreaking were GE vice-chairman John Rice, International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland, Niagara Region MPP Vince Badway, Welland MPP Cindy Forster, Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney and Peabody Mayor Dave Augustyn.



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Welland Mayor Frank Campion and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne share a laugh before the groundbreaking ceremony for the city's new General Electric Brilliant Factory.





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Recreation back on canal

BERND FRANK
Postmedia Network

Welland's recreational canal was turned into the world-wide wading centre for inflatable pink flamingoes on Sunday afternoon.

The big, buoyant birds, with black and white eyes and black beaks, were bobbing here, there and everywhere among an armada of anything — and everything — inflatable as Welland Float Fest, the flatwater sport for couch potatoes, debuted in spectacular fashion.

Phill Gladman's brainchild, spawned only six weeks ago and fashioned after an event in Helsinki, Finland, had a registration of 1,508, despite advertising limited to word-of-mouth and Facebook.

A chance to put the "recreation" back into the recreational canal and let the current do all the work on a lazy, summer afternoon struck a chord on social media.

Dawn Benoit convinced three friends to accompany her on the 1½-hour trip from Woodstock, while Shannon D'Onofrio, Laurie MacDonald and Megan Roberts, who work together at Dofasco, came from Hamilton "to be part of the fun."

"There is too much negative stuff in the world. This is something positive," Roberts said.

Kelly Bashak made the trip from Windsor and, along with 12 family members and friends from Georgetown and Mississauga, all of them clinging to pink flamingoes, treated Eileen Bashak of Fonthill to a belated present for her 84th birthday.

"This is my birthday present, and I really enjoyed it," said Eileen, hugging the neck of a white swan that she, as the guest of honour, got to use as a floater.

From the Lincoln Street Docks, the starting line for what organizers hope will become an annual event, inflatables of

all sizes, their bright colours spanning the spectrum, made for a spectacular sight as people reclaimed the canal.

"This is Welland at its finest — people coming out and having a good time," said Brad Ulich, owner of Budget Appliances on King Street in Welland.

Ulich, who loaned organizers his truck and trailer for the day for donations of non-perishable food items, was equally impressed by two things he didn't see.

"I don't see one kid looking for a Pokémon, and I don't see kids with computers," he said.

Reg Johnson of Jordan risked a stay in the doghouse by choosing Float Fest over accompanying his wife to a birthday party for an in-law.

"I was kind of torn between going to the birthday party and pleasing everyone else, or coming here and pleasing myself," he said. "Some things are worth being in the doghouse for."

Food trucks and vendors cre-



BERND FRANK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The Welland Recreational Canal is awash with a different type of watercraft for first ever Welland Float Fest.

ated a carnival-like atmosphere on shore and Canadian Tire was an especially big hit with festival-goers by bringing along air compressors to make flat flamingoes full again.

About the only dark cloud on what organizer Leanne Villale called a "celebration of nostalgia" were storm clouds and rumbling thunder that forced

lifeguards to pull people out of the water out of concerns for their safety.

Who knew Mother Nature wasn't that into Facebook?

While a forced break that lasted less than an hour produced some grumblings, Kelly Bashak said organizers were right to err on the side of caution, and after the week she's had she knows a thing or two about the dangers of mixing water with bad weather. She was out sailing when a tornado touched down near La Salle in the Windsor area last week.

"Those clouds look pretty menacing," she said looking toward Main Street Bridge. "I think pulling people from the

water is entirely reasonable."

Gladman is already looking forward to next year's Float Fest. He hopes to boost attendance by challenging people to be part of a Guinness World Record for most people floating on a body of water or most inflatables.

Gladman was overjoyed so many people accepted the invitation to enjoy the canal. For him, Sunday represented a night-and-day difference with the last time he floated on the canal.

"I looked at the canal, which was next to empty, and I'm the only one in it," Gladman said. "This is what I like to see."

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LOCAL NEWS

Problems of keeping officers on the front lines

LAW from page 2

"We are facing critical challenges in our ability to meet and maintain minimum staffing levels on the front line," he wrote. "This is not good for anyone, including you as the frontline, members in detective offices and specialized units."

"Given these circumstances, it may soon be necessary to redeploy from specialty units to fill the gaps on the front line," McGuire wrote the vast majority of officers do everything they can to come to

work every day, but he has "little doubt" some are using sick days as paid leave.

"Not from one moment would I begrudge anyone of you for utilizing sick time when you are unable to fulfill your work responsibilities due to sickness," he said. "That said, I need all of you to be aware of the impact on the service, on your fellow officers, on the community, that occurs when healthy, able-bodied members choose to use sick time as leave."

McGuire wrote that those

who do come to work every day can become overworked, disillusioned and resentful towards officers who abuse the system.

It also impacts the budget. McGuire told *The Standard* when the NRP is unable to meet its minimum staffing levels — which can be caused by a number of different issues, including the use of sick time — it is obligated to hire members on their day off to fill those vacancies. Those hires are paid at an overtime rate of 1.5 times their regular rate.

In terms of cost, the NRP spent \$5,134,660 on uniform overtime in 2015, a police board report said. The number was up from \$3,848,345 in 2014.

As the chief noted, the final overtime budget figures include factors other than sick time. Major investigations, vacations, training time and court time all have an impact.

Cliff Priest, president of the Niagara Region Police Association, the union that represents the officers, took issue with the number of points in the memo.

"We have not seen anything to justify his assertions," he said. "If we had, we would have expected these officers to be charged (under the Police Services Act)."

"I know the chief is constantly harassed by the police service board about members being off sick because he has to use overtime. I think some of it is politically driven, but a lot of my members were really offended by the memo."

"The ones who were on duty were offended. The ones who were off sick aren't happy about being characterized as malingerers."

Priest said the ongoing contract negotiations between the board and the association had nothing to do with the situation. Niagara's officers have been working without a contract for eight months.

"There is no protest," Priest said. "It wasn't the 'Blue Flu.' Some of the people he was talking about were off on long-term disability. Some have been off sick for quite a while. It's not like it was a flood of 40 officers on that one day suddenly hooked. It should not have come as a shock."

"No one is allowed to discuss the specific details of deployment; but, I can say, we disagree with his numbers. From our point of view, it is more of a crisis of staffing levels than a crisis of sickness."

The NRP would not confirm how many officers are off on long-term disability. In a public report in 2015, the NRP had 17 members on long-term disability with two claims pending approval.

Along with public safety concerns, police board chair Boh Gale said he is concerned about the budget implications from misuse of sick time.

Police board members watch the overtime numbers closely. They receive a detailed quarterly breakdown of how and when it is being used. It is often a topic of discussion at police board meetings.



Priest

"We have great police officers, and they are well paid, but we can't put up with this," Gale said. "We have to solve it. Nobody can be happy about this — from the officers who show up for duty every day to the taxpayers."

"We know overtime costs are a killer. It's an issue for everybody in government with fire departments and city staff, but having 40 front-line people off sick at the same time, frankly, scares me."

"I understand people get sick, but 40 in one day? The chief did the right thing by sending the memo."

Priest said the board knows there are problems with staffing levels, but nobody wants to make the politically tough decision to add manpower, which would alleviate the overtime costs.

"We haven't hired like other services in Peel, York and Durham," Priest said. "The other services have hired to cover the increasing requirements. Before we had all the specialty units, we didn't run into overtime when people were sick."

"The times have changed. The legislation has changed, and you have to have dedicated units, but they keep taking away from the front line, and you can only do that for so long."

"There is a difference between front-line officers and someone working in a support unit. We have a job where deal with violent members of the public. People get injured. People get sick. You have to factor that into your staffing and your budget."

Gale said, in a perfect world, he would like to hire more officers, but that has to be balanced against controlling costs. A first-class constable in Niagara makes about \$92,000 a year.

"We can't have extra officers out there at what they are getting paid," he said. "We operate at tolerable levels. If I had a billion dollars in the budget, I would love to hire a ton more front-line officers."

"The bottom line is how can we allow for 40 people off sick in the budget? There are certain things that are out of our control, but we can't just throw our hands in the air and give up."

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LOCAL NEWS

IN BRIEFS

Niagara awarded funds to improve ER care

The province is injecting funds into Niagara to help improve emergency care. The region will receive \$817,579 that will fund dedicated nursing hours in order to reduce emergency wait times.

The Ontario government is providing funding to 20 municipalities for 300,000 dedicated emergency room nursing hours at 49 hospitals this year.

Those dedicated nurses will work exclusively on receiving

low-acuity patients from ambulances, which will allow paramedics to respond to other 911 calls in the community, rather than waiting in the emergency room.

Patients arriving at hospitals by ambulance with life-threatening conditions will continue to be given priority by hospital staff.

911 call about fire was to get quicker police response

A Port Colborne man will appear in court after allegedly

making a false 911 call about a fire.

Jacques Cousineau, 55, is charged with public mischief.

Police say he called emergency services to report a fire at a residence, but when Niagara Regional Police, emergency medical services and the fire department arrived on scene there was no fire.

Police say he had made a call a short time earlier about something that wasn't deemed an emergency and appears to have been trying to get police to the scene more quickly by making the second call.

Cousineau is to appear in court at a later date.

The NRP says making a false 911 call can result in criminal charges.

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LOCAL NEWS

Region gathering data on Niagara's draw

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

The regional municipality wants to know what's luring people to Niagara.

It has embarked on an extensive project to gather information about the area's draw in hopes of playing off those strengths to create more growth, while also addressing any weaknesses identified as a result.

The \$41,700 undertaking, facilitated by Markham-based realty firm PMA Brethour, includes a homeowner survey, stakeholder meetings, focus groups with new residents, and market surveys and one-on-one discussions with home builders and developers.

The project also includes a new home market review, which will compare Niagara against competitors in terms of product offering, pricing, property taxes, development charges, and zoning and bylaw restrictions.

The review will result in a series of detailed recommendations to help improve Niagara-

ra's market position and outline how to attract builders and new home buyers to the region.

The intention is to use the project's collective information to "generate economic prosperity and growth in Niagara," Regional Chairman Alan Caslin said.

The region, he said, has lagged behind other southern Ontario communities in terms of growth, but has recently begun see some uptake, "and we really want to know why."

That growth has come in the form of a housing boom, but "we're also seeing commercial and industrial (sectors) starting to ask a lot of questions around Niagara," Caslin said, "no doubt in part because of the transportation plan we've put in place with buses, trains and air-planes."

"I think right now what you're seeing is people appreciating that there's good value in Niagara."

To get to the bottom of the residential draw, a homeowner survey, targeting people who

have recently moved to the region, was sent to about 2,500 homes earlier this month.

Working with PMA Brethour, the Region looked at postal codes created in the past two years in an effort to reach the right audience.

The goal is to try and develop a profile of the type of people who are moving to Niagara, including demographic information such as age, family size, profession, education and income, as well as the community they're moving from, said Region communications specialist Daryl Barnhart.

The survey also asks questions about various forms of media people use to help determine the best avenues for regional advertising, he said.

"It's about where and how and who we should be marketing the region to."

The survey also offers an opportunity to volunteer for a focus group run by the realty firm.

See DATA on page 14



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LOCAL NEWS

What's luring people to Niagara?

DATA from page 13

Surveys are also being conducted with home builders to determine why they chose to develop in Niagara, what is working for them and what is not. Conversations are also being had with developers

who are not currently building in the area in order to find out why, Barnhart said.

The plan is to have a report and presentation brought forward to regional council outlining the results of the project before the end of the year.

Development of a marketing strategy will begin in 2017.

"It's really good to know why you're being successful and what matters to people, so we can promote those elements that really make sense," Caslin said. "We've got a drive

on now to try and increase the growth in Niagara and this is just part and parcel of what we're trying to do. This gives us the how to get it done."

The homeowner survey is available online at niagararegion.ca/home-survey.

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